

Mr. Andrew J. Seessel

Comments: Please find below my testimony on SB69 and SB70. I am unable to attend hearings this week.

Chairman Laible and members of the committee, thank you for providing the opportunity to offer testimony with regard to SB 69 and SB 70. I am a concerned parent with two children in the Bozeman Elementary School District.

I offer this testimony in support of SB 69 and SB 70 because they offer the best chance for our schools to provide an adequate educational opportunity for Montana's elementary and high school students over the next biennium. I encourage you to support these bills, but I also challenge you to make educating our youngsters your highest priority and find additional funds to reduce the shortfalls still inherent in SB 69 and 70. Just as school districts across the state are being forced to prioritize their needs and make cuts to programs, I encourage you to do the same. Instead of making across the board cuts or cutting budgets that are largest, prioritize state programs and make cuts accordingly.

As you consider the priority to place on education, consider that budget deficits will likely lead to increased class sizes and reductions in program offerings. These changes do have measured impacts on student performance:

1.) Evidence from studies designed to measure the effects of classroom size show a positive correlation between smaller classes and improved performance, particularly in grades kindergarten through third. (Reducing Class Size: What Do We Know? Pritchard, 1999)

2.) A survey of educational literature shows that researchers who are not convinced that smaller class sizes lead to improved performance will still concede that smaller classes can contribute to more individualized instruction, higher teacher morale, and more opportunities for teachers to implement innovative instructional programs. (Picus, Resource Allocation: Class Size Reduction: Effects and Relative Costs, 2000)

3.) In its report "College Readiness: Test Data Summaries, Overview: Class 2008," Montana's Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education notes that students who completed core course curriculum (4 years English, at least 3 years math and science, and 3 years social science) scored up to 13% higher on college entrance exams than those without full core preparation.

While specific results may be debated, the studies clearly indicate that students who have fewer opportunities to learn face significant challenges to learning.20

As you make your budgeting decisions, I also hope you will keep in mind that funding deficits that cause a child to fall behind early on will also cause that child to face an uphill fight for the rest of his academic and post-academic life. A recent study out of Northwestern University (Duncan, 2007) has shown that a quality early education is the most important predictor of future success.

As a kid from Tennessee, who was given great educational opportunities, I feel indebted to my kids to provide the same. My wife and I chose to live in Bozeman because of (among other things) the quality educational opportunity provided here. If Montana can not show a commitment to its next generation and to education, I will most certainly not allow my children to suffer the consequences of the state's decision.

Please remember that our kids are the future of Montana. They will be the income earners, the legislators, the business executives, and the community leaders. It is our job to prepare them for these roles.

Thank you for your time and attention

Drew Seessel

Andrew J. Seessel

7100 Jackson Creek Road

Bozeman, MT. 59715

p.406.556-1275

f.406.556.1274

Email: drew@seesselinvestments.com

Dear Chairman Laible,

I am writing to encourage you to support SB 69. As a parent and retired University teacher I see how our state is slipping behind our neighboring states in being able to hire qualified educators. We are not offering high enough salaries to draw quality educators from Wyoming, Nevada, Oregon or Washington. This bill offers a painless way for our wonderful state to hire the educators our children deserve and need.

We all know that Public Education is the foundation of democracy. By passing this bill we support our children now and equip them to address the many challenges of the future.

Thank you,

Toni Rehbein
715 Spanish Peaks Dr
Missoula, MT 59803-2438